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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: POTPOURRI OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS CASES

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¶11. Summary: The following is a collection of media reports on various types of TIP ranging from debt servitude to sex tourism. End summary.

DEBT OF THE PARENTS PAID BY ENSLAVING THE CHILDREN

¶12. In late May, the local newspaper "Express-K" and Kokshetau newspaper "Kurs" reported on a debt servitude incident in Kokshetau, northern Kazakhstan. The under-aged daughter of an enslaved woman was forced into the same servitude to ensure the mother's silence and help pay off her debt. A relative of the victim approached the leader of a Kokshetau NGO, the Feminist League, for help. Based on the facts provided by the relative, a Feminist League representative filed a complaint with the Administration of Combating Organized Crime of the Northern Kazakhstan Oblast Division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) on April 18, 2006. According to the Department on Combating Trafficking in Persons in the headquarters of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the complaint was denied due to the lack of an alleged crime. The MVD representative explained that the victim was questioned by the police but did not share any information that would support the compliant. On the contrary, she claimed that she was satisfied with her living and working conditions. The newspaper reported that according to various witnesses, she had bruises and scars and was hospitalized in early March. According to the Feminist League, when the victim was asked about injuries, she said that she was drinking and fell several times. The press also reported the victim refused to undergo a medical examination.

¶13. The businesswoman involved in this case is a well-known farm owner. According to the Feminist League, four more debt servitude victims escaped from the same farm but, being skeptical about the impartiality of law enforcement, are not willing to testify. The head of the Feminist League in Kokshetau alleged to post that her complaint was rejected because the farm owner has relatives working in the Kokshetau Division of the MVD. The MVD claimed, however, that the NGO leader is exaggerating the seriousness of the situation.

¶14. The alleged victim continues to work at the farm. Her older daughter also continues working for the relatives of the farm

owner as a household servant in return for food and clothes.

CHILD LABOR

15. Trafficking in child labor also exists in Kazakhstan. Interfax-Kazakhstan reported that according to Sofia An, Project Coordinator of ILO-IPEC (International Labor Organization and International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor), children are exploited primarily in agriculture, i.e. on tobacco and cotton farms, and in shady businesses such as at bazaars, on the streets and in petty crime. Sofia An reported that many children work on cotton farms in Southern Kazakhstan Oblast, with the consent of their parents, who justify the work as necessary for the family's survival.

FORCED PROSTITUTION IN KAZAKHSTAN...

16. In early June the "Express-K" newspaper reported the arrest of an 18-year old alleged pimp in Pavlodar (Northern Kazakhstan Oblast). His sex-slaves were reportedly locked in rented apartments. The suspect took the young women to saunas and hotels to sell their services. The pimp and his colleagues took almost all of the money earned by women, leaving barely enough for food. Victims say that they were threatened and beaten regularly. One of them contacted the police, who began an investigation which led to the arrest of the teenaged pimp.

...AND ABROAD

17. According to the MVD, on January 6, 2006, the Administration of Combating Organized Crime of the Karaganda Oblast Division of

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the MVD arrested a resident of Karaganda who was the head of the criminal organization that trafficked women to clients abroad. The traffickers reportedly enlisted the support of security guards of various tourist hotels in destination countries whose role was to ensure access to the hotels and scout for promising clients. All earnings were taken from the victims. As in most trafficking cases, the prostitutes were threatened and punished in case of disobedience. Police discovered a similar case in Astana in March.

18. In the end of April, "Express-K" reported that in the southern Kazakhstani city of Taraz, police arrested a female trafficker almost a year ago. After being convicted of trafficking young women to Turkey for sexual exploitation, the woman received a four year suspended sentence. The Procurator's Office objected to the Court's leniency. The objection was sustained and the trafficker was sent to prison.

SUMMER INTERNSHIP

19. Not all trafficking cases include violence. Policemen of the Administration of Combating Organized Crime of the Almaty Oblast Division of the MVD opened a criminal case regarding abduction of under-aged girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation. It appears that a criminal organization conveyed under-aged girls between Ushtobe and Almaty for quite some time until a 13-year old was abducted. Policemen noticed very young girls from Ushtobe on Saina Street in Almaty, which is notorious for prostitution. Upon investigation, the police determined that the girls had been kidnapped. The criminal group that organized the trafficking consisted of a female pimp from Almaty, her assistant in Ushtobe, drivers of private taxis, and an under-aged boy who was a schoolmate of a potential "victim." Their victims were typically from poor families and displayed promiscuous behavior. The group lured its victims into taxis using their schoolmates as bait. No

violence was necessary since the victims did not offer any resistance. However, according to Mr. Sansyzbayev, Head of the Regional Department of Internal Affairs, many girls from Ushtobe travel to Almaty to earn some money during summer break and, therefore, it is difficult to identify those leaving Ushtobe involuntarily.

COMMENT

¶10. Comment: In a country where the media is kept on a tight leash, it is a good sign that trafficking cases are showing up in the press at all. Unfortunately, a change in society's attitude towards TIP victims is slow to be realized. Our main contact in IOM frequently laments the difficulty in changing the belief that trafficking is usually the victim's fault. In press reports, the victims are regularly described as choosing their path and therefore are responsible for the consequences, notwithstanding the facts of the cases. At the senior level of Kazakhstani police forces we repeatedly hear of the Government's commitment to attacking this crime. Given the size of the police force and the limited budget for providing in-service officer training, changing the attitudes in law enforcement will also be a long process. However, senior-level MVD support, publication of the arrests noted above, and cases such as the one in Taraz, where an objection to a light sentence was sustained, give hope for continued progress in combating trafficking. End comment.

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